

# The Citizen Forester

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## Planting Trees: The Future Lies in Our Hands

- By Jeremiah Woolley, MCA, University of Massachusetts

Trees play an important role in our daily lives by providing us with oxygen, beauty, and shade, along with contributing to the green landscape of Massachusetts in which we live. Trees in our communities are also proven to reduce energy costs, decrease air pollution, buffer sound, and increase property values.

However, when it comes to planting trees and shrubs in our community landscapes, many fundamental steps are overlooked more often than not. Taking the appropriate steps when engaging in the “simple act of planting a tree,” will ensure the longevity and health of our community forests for generations to come.

### Steps to proper tree planting

#### **1. *Choosing a Location***

The first step to any planting is selecting and evaluating a planting location. Depending on the plant species, we need to consider the following; is it near power lines or any other utilities that interfere with growth, is it near a street, walkway, or building? Is it in a public park or common, or in a lawn? These questions will determine what the type of tree or shrub to plant, and will lead us to the next step -- choosing the tree for the right place.

#### **2. *Selecting the appropriate species***

When selecting the right species to plant, consider the following information about each potential tree:

- What is the tree's mature height and spread?
- Does it prefer full sun or partial shade?
- Does it like wet or dry soils?
- Is it sensitive or tolerant of salt?
- Is it recommended for the community landscape and for your hardiness zone?
- What types of fruit and flowers does it have?

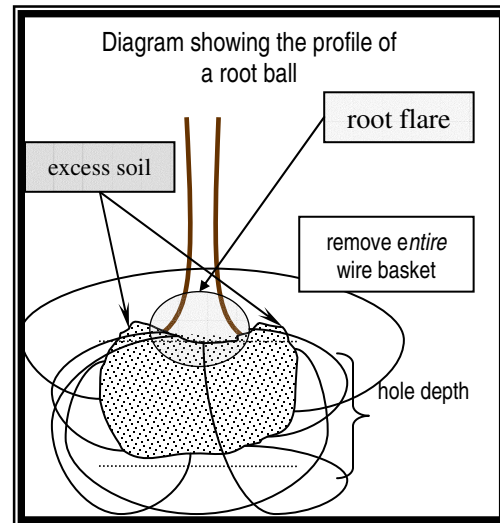
You should then use this information to determine which species will fit into your location. If the plants requirements match the location, the species is the right choice.

#### **3. *Selecting Planting Stock***

Now that you have a species selected along with knowledge of the planting location, you can begin the planting process. Trees are generally sold in one of three ways: balled and burlapped (B&B), container, or bare root. Balled and burlapped or container, being the most common. Containerized plants are said to be easiest to plant and have the best results. When selecting the tree whether it's in a balled and burlapped or containerized be sure that the root flare is exposed. It is always best to visit the nursery yourself and select trees. Remember, you can always reject poor stock.

#### **4. Finding the Root Flare**

The **root flare** is where the tree's trunk widens out into the topmost structural roots. In many cases, the root flare may be buried or hidden by soil. It is important to find the root flare by removing the soil away from the base of the trunk using your hands, a hose or a garden claw without damaging the bark. Sometimes small adventitious roots can grow from the trunk of the tree if it has been buried for some time, so keep excavating until you find the flare and the structural roots. It may take some digging, but this is a critical process and will determine the depth of the planting hole.



#### **5. The Planting Hole**

Before digging the hole, calculate the root ball height by measuring the distance from the root flare to the bottom of the root ball or container. Use this measurement to determine the depth of the hole. Start by digging the hole two, to three times as wide as the ball or the container, and as deep as or slightly shallower than the calculated measurement of the root ball height. The hole should be saucer shaped with tapered rather than straight sides. Be sure the depth is **no deeper** than the calculated height. Planting trees too deep will cause roots to not grow to their potential leading to stress and possibly death. When the hole is prepared to correct height and width, you are now ready to prepare the tree for the hole.

#### **6. Tree Preparation and Planting**

For a containerized tree, completely remove the container by lifting the tree out of it, or cut it off if it's difficult to remove. Once the container is completely removed, inspect the roots to see if there are any circling the ball. If they are, slice the sides and the bottom of the ball, using a sharp knife, in a few places pressing in about one inch. This will reduce the chances of the tree producing girdling roots. Do not cut the roots using a shovel or a spade. Now place the ball in the hole. Add a little soil around the ball to stabilize it and prevent it from leaning. Now you can backfill with the original soil.

Use the same process for balled and burlapped stock except the wire, twine, and burlap should be completely removed from the ball before backfilling. This will reduce the chances of circling or girdling roots.

#### **7. Care after Planting**

**Watering-** Now that the soil is replaced, water thoroughly. Be sure to soak the soil around the ball to ensure penetration to the root zone. During the first growing season, thoroughly water once or twice per week.

**Mulching-** Applying 2-3 inches of woodchips or other organic materials to planting area will help retain moisture along with adding nutrients to the soil. **Never** pile mulch against the stem of the plant. Doing so will cause the stem to decay, leading to stress and possible death.

**Staking-** Trees do not need to be staked unless they cannot stand up alone or are planted in a windy area. If they do need to be staked, be sure the stake is removed once the tree is established. This usually takes one year.

**Pruning-** No pruning should be done when the tree is first planted except for dead wood.

Taking the appropriate steps when selecting a tree species and planting it, as outlined above, will ensure the longevity and health of the tree for generations to come.

Following these few guidelines you will help to make sure that the right tree is planted in the right place, and that the maximum amount of benefits will be provided by the tree as it matures in the landscape.

## Picks and Shovels

**Mass Tree Count Inventory System:** The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program is encouraging up to 38 additional communities to take advantage of the free offering of three-years of TreeKeeper Online tree inventory management system. We will be holding a second training and sign-up later this spring (keep an eye on the Citizen Forester) and please contact Eric Seaborn at 617-626-1468 or [eric.seaborn@state.ma.us](mailto:eric.seaborn@state.ma.us), if your community or agency might be interested.

In addition to those communities who are interested in using this system for active tree inventory management, **we are also encouraging communities that already have an ongoing inventory management system to submit a snapshot of their data.** This will allow us to view and analyze comparative data for multiple Massachusetts communities and track the condition of our state's urban and community forest.

***Citizen Forester* Reaches 100!** With our 100<sup>th</sup> issue, the *Citizen Forester* hits a landmark, or perhaps it's a benchmark, maybe it's a watershed event, or it could be just an excuse to celebrate brought on as a quirk of our base-ten number system. In any case, if you would like to note this passing with a comment on the *Citizen Forester*, feel free to e-mail at [paul.jahnige@state.ma.us](mailto:paul.jahnige@state.ma.us).

**Six Views of the Urban Forest, Lecture Series:** The Lexington Tree Committee is sponsoring a series of lectures on urban and community forest issues. All events are free, made possible through a grant from DCR and will be at the Lexington Carey Library at 7:30 p.m. Contact John Frey at [jwfrey2@aol.com](mailto:jwfrey2@aol.com). Series includes:

- January 18, 2006: Peter del Tredici, Senior Research Scientist, Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University will speak on The Role of Trees in the Urban Forest.

- February 15, 2006: Peter Alden, writer of 14 nature field guides including National Audubon Field Guide to New England will be speaking on Invasive Woody Plants of Lexington's Roadsides.
- April 12, 2006: Clarissa Rowe, Landscape Architect, head of the Arlington Land Trust and Jane Calvin, Director of the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust will speak on Urban Forestry: The Broader Benefits.
- May 10, 2006: William Cullina, Director of the Wildflower Nurseries will speak on In Homage to Wood – Native Trees for the Urban Forest and Garden.
- September 13, 2006: Jad Daley Campaign Director for the Northern Forest Alliance will speak on Forests on the Edge – Linking Northeastern Wildlands and the Urban Forest – September 13, 2006.
- October 18, 2006: David Pinsonneault Lexington's Superintendent of Public Grounds and Tree Warden will speak on implementing a Tree Management Program in Lexington.

**Trees Available!** The Town of Hadley's, Shade Tree Committee has been raising trees in a nursery for community use that is now overstocked. The town would now like to offer free trees to state agencies or municipalities who can come dig and transport them. These are nice trees, most at least one inch in caliper and mostly oaks, (swamp white, pin and bur). Contact Michael Klimoski, Tree Warden, or Gus O'Grady at (413) 586-2390, Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. to arrange a time to flag and dig trees.

## Growing on Trees

**Linking Girls to the Land Grants:** These grants of up to \$2,500 encourage Girl Scouts to partner with federal natural resource agencies to involve girls in natural resource issues and explore careers related to wildlife conservation. They encourage agencies to participate in the Girl Scout program by helping with conservation-related award work, service projects.

The project submitted for a grant award must focus on one or more of the following content areas:

- Environmental Education. Nature Observation; Developing Human/Environment Connections; Field Ecology; Ecosystem Monitoring; Scientific Research; Interpretive Programs; Leave No Trace
- Outdoor Skills Development. Front Country Camping (at established campsites, including council owned); Backcountry Camping; Horseback Riding; Cross Country Skiing; Rock Climbing; Hiking; Canoeing; Fishing
- Volunteer Service. Environmental action or conservation service projects on public or private land.

For more information or the application look on the Online Council Network or contact: Jodi Stewart, Elliott Wildlife Values Project, Girl Scouts of the USA 420 Fifth Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10018 T: 212-852-8076 F: 212-852-6515 Email:

[linkinggirls@girlscouts.org](mailto:linkinggirls@girlscouts.org). Visit the website: [www.epa.gov/linkinggirls](http://www.epa.gov/linkinggirls).

## On The Horizon

**Leadership Training for Urban Forestry Volunteer Organizations, February 27-March 1, 2006**, Nebraska City, Nebraska at the inspiring Arbor Day Foundation's Lied Lodge. This intensive 2.5 day training program focuses on the needs of non-profits, service groups, and community organizers engaged in urban and community forestry. Core topics will include:

- Standards of Excellence & Accountability
- Marketing & Communications
- Fundraising
- Program Models
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Public Policy & Advocacy

For more information see <http://actrees.org/site/programs.html>.

### **UMASS Community Tree Conference, March 23, 2006**

The University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Service, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the USDA Forest Service, are sponsoring a day-long Community Tree Conference on Thursday, March 23, 2006 at Stockbridge Hall, UMass, Amherst. The focus of this year's conference is planting trees in urban and suburban areas. For more information and to register, see the UMass GreenInfo website: <http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/programs/conferences.html>.

## Species Spotlight



### ***Acer griseum*, Paperbark Maple**

**P**aperbark maple, is a small deciduous tree that will grow up to 30' tall. Its attractive, exfoliating cinnamon-brown bark makes it ideal for an ornamental. It also has a short main trunk with multiple stem branching out creating many upright trunks and hardy to zone 4.

**Advantages and Limitations:** With its attractive bark, Paperbark maple has an oval upright shape which can be ideal for a small yard. Along with being a slow growing species, it is relatively pest free. It prefers full sun or partial shade and thrives the best in a moist, well drained soil. It can also tolerate slightly acidic soils.

**Right Tree for the Right Place:** Paperbark maple is a relatively small stature tree and is recommended for planting under power lines and in smaller planting spaces. It can, however, get up to 30' in height and 30' wide and so care should be taken. Paperbark

Maple is an ideal specimen which can be used in mini groves, at the woods edge and is great for small yards.

For more information visit <http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/a/acegri/acegri1.html>

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**If you have a topic or addition to the Citizen Forester newsletter, please let us know.**

**If you have questions about Urban and Community Forestry, contact:**



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